

Jimmy plays it again

AT 78 years of age, Jimmy Stewart isn't about to give up working.

"There were several things my father used to say — and I take it they were directed at me — and one of them was that nothing takes the place of hard work," he says.

"I sort of kept that in my mind all the time. I had a deep love and respect for my father and I thought it was good advice.

"So I'm still very busy. I spend most of my time reading scripts and I've done some travelling."

Jimmy Stewart speaks in that slow, unmistakable drawl that is so loved by mimics.

The reason for the call? The international re-release on video (locally by CIC-Taft) of *The Glenn Miller Story*, with Jimmy in the title role. The film, made in 1953, was a big hit in its day.

The 'new' version features the original stereo soundtrack which no one got to hear at the time because installation of the necessary stereo equipment in cinemas was considered too expensive.

Several cuts also have been made "to move it along," according to Jimmy.

The cuts were necessary because the only existing print was the 118-minute uncut version. So Jimmy was brought in as an advisor and part of the restoration team.

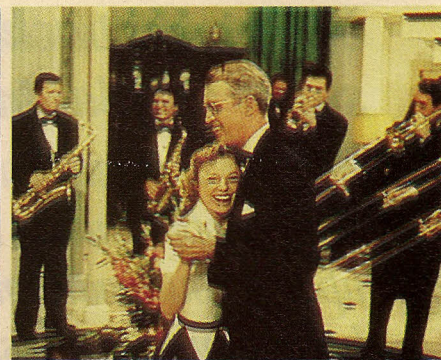
"It was very exciting to be involved," Jimmy says.

There have been plenty of exciting and entertaining moments in Jimmy Stewart's career — which spans more than 80 films.

His own favorite? "Frank Capra's film *It's A Wonderful Life*. It was the first film I made after the war and it came not from a book or an actual happening but from an idea that Frank Capra got from a PS on the bottom of a letter which read: 'No man is born to be a failure.'

"Capra took that line and gave it to Hackett and Goodridge, two of the finest scriptwriters.

"When the film was first released it wasn't successful but it has become popular at Christmas time because it has a happy ending."



ABOVE: Jimmy Stewart as Glenn Miller. ABOVE RIGHT and RIGHT: Jimmy with co-star June Allyson in scenes from *The Glenn Miller Story*.

Thanks to video, many people are discovering Jimmy Stewart's rich past — films like the Academy Award-winning *Philadelphia Story* and Hitchcock classics like *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*.

"It's very nice," he says modestly. He's just as modest about his Academy Awards, citations and acknowledgments such as a statue in his hometown of Indiana, Pennsylvania.

"They mean a great deal to me," he said. "I'm very proud of them. It's a nice thing to look back on the great good fortune I've had."

Jimmy received a Bachelor of Science degree in architecture from Princeton University before deciding to pursue a stage career.

He starred in numerous Broadway plays before signing a film contract and heading for Hollywood, where in the early Thirties he made his debut in *Murder Man*.

His burgeoning career was interrupted by the war — Jimmy was a bomber pilot in the Army Air Force and served for five years.

When the war was over, he was at a loose end.

"I wasn't sure about acting. I was away five years and you think about a lot of things. Can you forget how to act?"

"I give credit to Frank Capra and Lionel Barrymore. Lionel gave me a lecture — he really gave me hell



— and I was very grateful to him. He made me see I was working in a worthwhile profession."

Above all, Jimmy has maintained a great respect for his audience.

"I remember many years ago... 53 years ago... I was in a car on the way to Salt Lake to make a picture, and the guy with me, a comedian, said to me: 'You may get along all right in this business, but remember this — never treat an audience as customers; always treat them as your partners'."

Jimmy's real-life partner is his wife, Gloria, to whom he has been married 37 years.

Both are heavily committed to wildlife conservation, particularly the African Wildlife Foundation, and his wife is on the board of the Los Angeles Zoo.

Considering Jimmy's powerful performance in Frank Capra's *Mr Smith Goes To Washington*, had he ever considered politics?

"Well, no one ever asked me!" Jimmy says. "Mr Smith was a very special film, but I don't think I could talk fast enough to be a politician."